The NCC cadets are involved, during vacations, in a number of social service activities like mass literacy, tree plantation, blood donation, etc. They render help during natural calamities when called upon to do so. They also attend camps meant to promote national integration.

Small scale industries in Orissa

1942. SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of small-scale industries (SSI) financed by the State Bank of India in Orissa are sick;

(b) if so, what is the number of such sick units and how much amount has been blocked in such units; ond

(c) whether Government have taken any special steps to realise the amount from these units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARY): (a) and (b) State Bank of India has reported that the total number of Small Scale Industrial units financed by it in Orissa which have fallen sick is 2974, involving an amount of Rs. 12.97 crores as at the end of June, 1986.

(c) Legal steps have been taken by the Bank to recover its dues in respect of non-viable sick units.

Assistance given to ex-servicemen

1943. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of ex-servicemen who are living in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) whether Government give priority to them in the allotment of house sites and agricultural land;

(c) if so, what are the details of the houses sites and land allotted to them during the last three years; and

(d) what other facilities, concessions or assistance the Central Government/State Govt. are planning to give to these ex-servicemen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI ARUN SINGH): (a) It has been estimated that there are about one lakh Ex-servicemen in Madhya Pradesh.

(b) and (c) The subject of allotment of houses/house sites and surplus agricultural land falls within the jurisdiction of the State Governments. However, the State Governments have been requested to make reservation of houses/house sites for Ex-Servicemen. They were also requested to allot priority to Ex-Servicemen in the allotment of surplus agricultural land. As per information available with the Ministry of Defence, the State Government of Madhya Pradesh has made a reservation of 30 per cent for the Ex-Servicemen in the allotment of houses/house sites. The State Government has made provision for allotment of land to those Defence Personnel who are gallantry award winners and landless ex-servicemen whose monthly pension is less than Rs. 325 per month. The scheme has been in operation since November, 1979.

Details of house sites and land allotted to ex-servicemen during the last three years are not available.

(d) The Ex-servicemen are entitled to a number of concessions and facilities for their resettlements and welfare like reservation of posts under Central Government and Central Public Sector Undertakings and State Governments, relaxation in age and educational qualifications training facilities to get gainful employment, technical and financial assistance in putting up self-employment ventures, canteen

facilities, medical facilities for ex-servicemen pensioners in Military hospital, etc. The objective is to enhance the facilities and concessions for resettlement and welfare of ex-servicemen and to make more effective use of the existing facilities.

Lowering of age-limit for the All India Services

1944. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the age limit for the candidates appearing in the All India Services examinations was increased and then lowered again during the last few years;

(b) if so, what were the reasons thereof; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take in regard to the likely reduction in the number of candidates from the rural background which would naturally follow as a result of the recent reduction in the age-limit for these examinations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) The upper age limit of candidates appearing in the I.A.S etc. examination was 24 years till 1971. It was raised to 26 in 1972 and to 28 years in 1979.

Government's objective is to recruit under strict competitive conditions, young men and women, fresh from graduation, and to train and mould them to suit the behavioural and skills requirements of the Civil Services. This objective had been eroded by the upper age limit of 28 years introduced in 1979. The upper age limit of 28 years had adversely affected the element of competitiveness of the examination in as much as a relatively young candidate of 21 years of age was pitted against a relatively old candidate of about 28 years, placing the former at a disadvantage and giving an unfair advantage to the latter. A wide age span of eligibility also enabled the older candidates to master the techniques of examination and inadvertantly placed a premium on study by rote as against the intrinsic intellectual qualities of critical analysis and power of assimilation and width and depth of knowledge of the candidate. It was also found difficult to mould the older candidates to the requirements of an organised Civil Service. Government also did not receive the benefit of a full term of service (assumed as 33 years) from the older candidates who entered service at a later stage. Taking into account these considerations and on the recommendations of the Union Public Service Commission and in consultation with State Governments, in so far as the All India Services are concerned, the Government of India decided in the year 1983 to reduce the upper age limit from 28 years to 26 years with effect from the Civil Services Examination, 1985. After giving a third and final chance to the candidates in 1986 Examination Government has implemented the decision from the Civil Services Examination, 1987.

Before taking the above decision to reduce the upper age limit, it was also examined whether it will adversely affect rural candidates. It was felt that people from rural areas with their meagre resources could ill-afford to educate their children indefinitely are let them wait for long to get passes for best employment in Government. Therefore, a higher upper age limit was likely to help the urban candidates rather than rural candidates. Normally, candidates for the Civil Services Examination including those from rural areas, would acquire the minimum educational qualification by the time they attain the age of about 21 years which leaves them about 4-5 years' time to appear for the examina-